

ΕΠΙΦΑΝΙΑ,

OR

A Discourse upon the Manifestation
of CHRIST to the Gentiles

By the

Appearance of a **STAR.**

By FRANCIS GREGORY, D.D.

And

Rector of *Hambleton* in the County
of *Bucks.*



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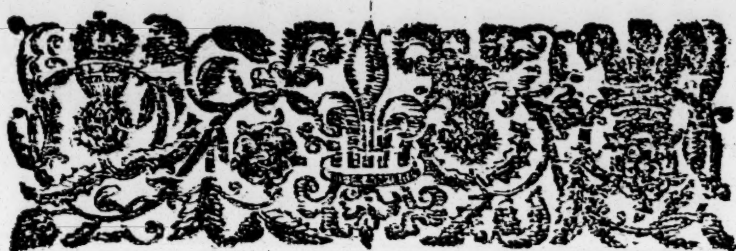
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To the Right Honourable
HENRY
LORD ARLINGTON,

Lord High Chamberlain of his Majesties Household,
One of the Lords of His Majesties most Honourable
Privy Councill, &c.

My Lord,

SHOULD I say any thing, in
this Publick manner, of Your
Lordships Merits, Worth, and
Parts both Natural & Acquired,
though Flattery it could not be, yet Vanity it
would; because it were to say no more than
that, whereof every man, who is not a stran-
ger to your Person, is already satisfied.

And to tell the world how much, & in what
way, your Lordship hath obliged me, is but

an Easy and Trivial kind of Gratitude. But as mean a Return as it is, I must make This or None. For, as your Honours Soul is too Generous to expect, and your Fortunes too ample either to need or admit, a just Recompense; so are mine too slender to make one.

The truth is, where there is an utter Impossibility to repay a Kindness, it would be something like Ingratitude so much as to attempt it; and he, who doth but offer at a Return for Great mens favours, doth thereby derogate from them; he makes them less by thinking them capable of being recompensed.

But though it be too great a Presumption, in such a case, to attempt a Satisfaction; yet, that debt, which can never be discharged, must be upon all Occasions, and now is upon This, Gratefully acknowledged.

But had your Lordship never obliged me, by any considerable Kindness, to make this Publick Adress; had not Gratitude invited me to it, yet even Prudence would. For, such is the main Subject of this Discourse, that it can not be Entitled to any Person for its Patron so fitly, as to your Honour.

For

For the Persons, concerned herein
 are the *Μάγοι*, the Wise men of the East.
 And if this Character of theirs be, as
 several Authours think, and our own Trans-
 lation intimates, not only free from all im-
 putations, but an Elogy and Title of Ho-
 nour; to whom could I have more pro-
 perly recommended the Story of these Great
 Sages, then to your Lordship, who are, in
 this and all other their Laudable Endow-
 ments, so hugely like them? a Person of
 such eminent Prudence, Wisdome, and un-
 derstanding, as to be singled out of Three
 Nations, as the fittest man therein, to be
 made the Principal Secretary of State; and
 still to have the same Influence upon the
 King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland,
 as these Wise men once had upon the *Ὁ μὶς*
Βασιλεὺς-- the Persian Monarch.

Besides, the Thing much concerned in
 this little Tract is a Star, which being with
 us the highest Badg of Honour, it was not
 possible for me to Dedicate a subject of this
 nature to any fitter Person than your Lord-
 ship, there being no man, whose blond is
 not Royal, that doth more highly deserve to
 wear one.

But

*Que proprie
 Magia nuncu-
 patur, perfecti
 creditur, &
 summa Scien-
 tie potestas;
 quando Persa-
 rum lingua est
 Magus, non
 fere alius quā
 Divinorū In-
 terpres et Cul-
 tor. Celsus
 Rhod. Lect.
 Antiq. l. 9.
 c. 25.*

But whilst I do thus Publickly acknow-
ledge my Obligations to your Lordship, I
shall only contract upon my self new scores,
and render my Debt so much the greater. For
if it shall please your Honour to permit these
Papers to walk abroad under the Protection
of your Great Name, it will yet further ob-
lige their mean Authour to pray for the con-
tinuance of your Lordships Prosperity in this
world, and the Assurance of your Felicity
in the next, which is, and ever shall be, the
Earnest Petition of

Your Lordships most obliged
and humble Servant.

Fran. Gregory.



St. Matth. 2. 2.

*We have seen his Star in the East, and are
come to worship him.*

AS the day of our blessed Saviours Nativity, is commonly stiled by Ancient Writers Θεοφάνεια, the *Appearance of God*, so this day, which is the *twelfth* from that, and the last of our *Christmas* Festivals, is usually called Ἐμφάνεια, the *Epiphany*, or, *Manifestations*. Basil. M. de
hum. Christi
generat. p. 593.

The Names of Festivals ordinarily running in the Plural Number, as the Διονύσια among the *Grecians*, and the *Saturnalia*, among the *Romans*, and the פורים, among the *Jews*; we are the less concerned to assign a Reason, why our Ἐμφάνεια should do so too. And yet St. *Austine*, and perhaps from him St. *Bernard*, have left us this account. *Tres apparitiones Domini legimus, &c.* we read of Three Manifestations of our Lord; that to the Wise men of the East, by the Appearance of a *Star* at or near his birth; That to St. *John Baptist*, by a voice from Heaven Aust. in E-
piph. Ser. 1.
Bern. in E-
piph. Ser. 2.

Heaven, and the visible Descent of the Holy Ghost upon him at his Baptism; and that by the Miraculous Transubstantiation of Water into Wine to the Guests and Waiters at a Wedding. And if all these Appearances of Christ, according to the Tradition of Antiquity, did happen, as St. *Bern.* tells us, *Una quidem die, sed non uno tempore*, though not in the self same Year, yet upon one and the same Day, we have a sufficient reason, why that Greek Father might stile it in the Plurall number, *ἡμέραι* *ἡμερῶν*, the day of Appearances.

Greg. Naz.
Orat. 40. p.
351.

The Solemn Observation of this Festival is no kin to any of those Jewish Feasts, which were Antiquated and Abolished at and by the coming of Christ; nor yet is it any late Superstitious invention of any Party of men; but an Antient and laudable usage of the Christian Church. Indeed, I read of some, who refused to observe it: Saint *Austine* tells us. *Diem istum Donatistæ nunquam celebrare voluerunt*, The Donatists, those notorious Schismaticks of those times, whose Progeny and Spawn are some of ours, would by no means keep this day. But as for himself, and indeed the whole Catholick Church, he thus professeth. *Nos hunc diem hodie celebramus*, we do now celebrate this Festival; and that *In unitate Gentium*, according to the uniform practice of all Christian Nations.

Aug. in E-
piph. Ser. 2.

Aug. in Epiph.
Ser. 2.

Cyprianus de
Stella & Ma-
g.

And that the Observation of this day was more Antient than St. *Austin's* time, is evident, as from that forenamed instance of *Gregory Nazianzen*, so from that elder expression of St. *Cyprian* too, who mentions,

mentions, *Epiphania Solennia*, the solemn Celebration of the Epiphany.

That, which gave the first occasion to the Annual observation of this day, and is still the ground of its continuance, was and is the great mercy of God in revealing the Birth of his Son, and offering salvation by him, as well to the *Gentiles*, as to the *Jews*.

Those Select Persons of the *Pagan* world, to whom God was pleased so early to manifest the Nativity of his Son, and so to bring them unto *Bethlehem*, are stiled by the Fathers *Primitia Gentium*, the first fruits of the Gentiles. And who these men were, and what information they had, that the so long expected Messias and King of the Jews was now actually and newly born; we have this fair intimation given us by the Evangelist, and that from their own Mouths, *We have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him.*

Aug. in Epip.
Ser. 2.
Cyprian. de
Stella & Magis.

The Text contains Three things considerable.

1. The *Persons*, to whom God was now pleased to reveal the birth of his Son, *Wee*.

2. The *Occasion*, Means, or Instrument of this Revelation We have seen *his Star*, The same God, who thought fit to declare the Nativity of his Son to certain Jews by the message of an *Angel*, was pleased to reveal it to certain Gentiles, by the Information of a *star*, which Star St. *Austine* doth therefore call *Lingua Cæli*, The Tongue of Heaven.

Aug. in Epip.
Ser. 2.

B

3. The

3. The *Design* and end of this Revelation ; the Intention , which God had therein , together with the use, which these men made thereof, We are come to *Worship* him ; an act , wherein they did wisely comply with the purpose of God.

1. The First thing in the Text is the Consideration of the *Persons* to whom God was now pleased to reveal the Birth of his Son , *We* , Which Persons may be considered, First, As to their *Nation*. Secondly, As to their *Title*, and Character, Thirdly, As to their *Quality* , and Fourthly, As to their *Number*.

1. These Persons in the Text may be considered as to the *Nation*, in which they dwell, and from which they came.

The Evangelist saith only in General, *They came ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν* from the East , but from what part of the East, he doth not tell us. That they came ἐκ τῆς Περσῶν χώρας, from the *Persians* country, is the Assertion of St. *Chrysostom* ; and accordingly great St. *Basil* styles them, ἄνθρωποι Περσικῶν, Men of a *Persian* Extraction ; The same *Gregory Nazianzen* seems to intimate, when he saith τὸ μαγεύειν, Περσικόν, The *Magick Art* is a *Persian* thing.

Chryl. in Math. Hom. 6.
Basil M. de christ. gener.
Greg. Naz. adv. Jul. Orat. 3.

There are some, who think, that they came from *Mesopotamia*; St. *Cyprian* saith expressly, *a fluminibus Æthiopiæ*, they came from the Rivers of *Ethiopia*. but, notwithstanding these opinions, it is more probable that they came from *Arabia*. For, as *Grotius* well observes, *Munera, quæ attulerunt, Arabica sunt*, and so *Maldonate*, *Ipsa munera Patriam produunt*, whence they came, we may guess by what

Cyp. de stel. la & Magis.
Grot. in loc. Maidonat. in locum.

what

what they brought, *Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh*, which were the great Commodities of *Arabia* the happy.

This last opinion seems to be countenanced by that expression of the Psalmist, which literally belongs to *solomon*, but is thought to have had a second completion in *Christ*, *The Kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents; the Kings of Arabia and Sheba shall offer Gifts*; which latter clause *St. Hierom*, and our old Translation, reads thus, *Reges Arabum* the Kings of *Arabia* shall offer gifts, and withal *St. Hierom* tells us, *Hoc in Magorum muneribus inchoatum*: the first accomplishment of this Prophecy, as it relates to our blessed Saviour, was by the gifts of These very men in the Text.

Psal. 72.10.

Hieron. in locum.

But whether these men were *Persians*, or *Arabians*, or of some other Nation 'tis not much material, as to any concern of ours. That, wherein our Interest lieth, is sure enough; namely, that they were none of the Jewish nation; but, as *St. Cyprian* styles them, *Alienigenæ*, Aliens and Strangers, *ἑδνθ' ἀπηλλοτριωμένον τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ξένον*, saith great *St. Basil*, They were men of the Pagan world; and, as *Zegerus* calls them, *Exordium, ac Typus Gentium crediturarum*; They were the Beginning, the Pattern, and Representatives of all the Gentiles that should afterwards believe in *Christ*. And, upon this consideration, do we upon this day solemnly bless our God for their access to *Christ*, as being the first instance and Type of Ours.

Cyp. de Stella et Magis.

Basil. M. de humana Chr. generat.

2. These Persons in the Text may be considered as to that Title and Character that is given them.

The Evangelist tells us in the Verse immediately before the Text. *There came Wise men from the East*, so we ; but the Greek thus, *There came* *Magiam* *Μάγοι*, Magicians, a word of promiscuous use, which sometime signifieth that which is Good and laudable ; and sometimes that which is Bad and detestable ; for

Magiam
festo plausu
sapientissimus quisq;
excipit, veneratur, ac
colit, ut quæ
altior fit
sanctiorque
Philosophia
Cælius
Rhod. lect.
antiq. l. 9.
cap. 23.

I To be a Magician doth sometimes imply no more than to be a very Learned and knowing man ; and more particularly in that part of learning, which relates to the Sun, Moon, and Stars.

That these Magicians in the Text were such only in this first and commendable sense, is the opinion of several Interpreters, 'Οι μάγοι Ἀστρολόγοι, These Magicians were *Astrologers*, so *Theophrast* ; *Munster* calls them, *Præcipui siderum contemplatores*, Men very Eminent for their contemplation of the Stars. Which is in it self a thing so laudable, that *Maldonate* supposeth the Evangelist to give them the Name of Magicians, *honoris causa*, as an Elogy and high Commendation ; as being a Title of the same nature with that of *Caldeans* amongst the *Assyrians*, that of *Gymnosophists* or *Brachmanes* amongst the *Indians* ; that of *Hierophantæ* amongst the *Egyptians*, and that of *Druids* amongst the *Gauls*, all which are Terms of Honour and Veneration.

Theophyl.
in locum.
Munst. in
locum.

And suitable to this opinion doth our Translation give them this favourable and friendly Character ; *There came Wise men from the East* : such as the old Greeks stiled, Σοφοί, the *sages* of their times ; as if God, being willing to give the whole world

world an early notice that he sent his son to Redeem persons of all sorts, men of all capacities, was pleased to reveal his birth, as to some illiterate and silly *sheepheard* among the Jews, so to some Learned men amongst the Gentiles.

2. To be a *Magitian* doth sometimes signifie to be a *Conjurer*; one, that deals with a Familiar Spirit; one, that receives Informations and Assistances from Hell.

Such were *Jannes* and *Jambres*, *Ἄνδρες ἱερογυμναστῆς*, saith *Numenius*, Sacred Scribes or Priests of *Memphis*, but withall *Principes Magorum*, the very cheif of those Egyptian Conjurers, who, through the permission of God and help of the Devil, counterfeited the Miracles of *Moses*, and thereby contributed a great deal towards the hardning of *Pharaoh's* heart.

Such an one was that infamous *Simon*, surnamed *Magus*; who was, as *Eusebius* styles him, *ὁ πῦς*, a Notorious Impostor; one, that through the Devils assistance proved so lucky in his cheats, that, as the *Evangelist* saith, he was thought to be the great power of God. So strongly had he bewitched the Citizens of Rome, *ὡς ἀντίπαιτον ἀναδίσκει ὅτι θεὸν πανδηύον*, saith *Eusebius*, that in honour of him they erected a Statue to him with this Inscription. *Simoni Sancto Deo*, To *Simon* the holy God.

From this Black-art doth *Erasmus* acquit the men in the Text. *Nemo maleficas artes somniat, &c.* Let do man dream that they used this devilish Art, and so *Munster*, *Non quod Magiam exercuerunt, sed eam tenebant, ut confutare possent*, They are called Magi.

*Drusius ex
Numenio et
Nathana.*

*Eus. Hist.
l. 2. c. 14.*

Acts 8. 10.

*Eus. Hist.
l. 2. c. 14.*

*Erasm. in
locum.*

*Munster.
in locum.*

Magicians, not that they themselves did exercise that hellish Art; but that they learnt and understood it in order to confute it.

But although these Interpreters have such charitable thoughts of these Magicians in the Text; yet others there are, who judge more hardly of them. For, *Origen* seems to mention them, as men δαίμονων ἐμυλῶντας, that conversed with Devils; and Great St. *Basil* saith of them ἡ μαντείας προσέχοντες, &c. They gave themselves to Incantations, *St. Austin* mentions *Impietas in Sacrilegiis Magorum*, the Wickedness and Sacrilege of these Magicians, and that they were such in the worst sense, *Probabile est*, 'Tis probable, so *Grotius*, *Non dubium est*, There is no doubt, so *Ravanellus*.

And indeed this consideration of these Persons is very consistent with the design of God in the Incarnation of his Son, whom He sent amongst us to save some of the highest Criminals, as well as other who are much less Offenders. Upon which account, *Celsus* in *Origen* quarrels with our blessed Saviour for choosing such men to be his Servants, as were τελῶναι καὶ ταῦται πονηρότατοι, Publicans and Sea-men, both which were commonly observed to be Vile and Wicked Persons; so impious, that they are stiled in a certain Epistle, ascribed to St. *Barnabas*, ὡς πᾶσαν ἀνομίαν ἀνομώτεροι, Wicked even beyond all wicked Examples.

But what such profane wretches, as *Celsus*, cast as a Reproach upon our blessed Saviour, was indeed the greatest Argument of his Goodness, and one main designe of his coming into the world; for thus

Origen.
adv. Cels.
l. 1. p. 45.
Basil. de
hum. Christi
generat. p.
591.

Aug. in
Epiph. Ser.
2.
Grot. in
locum.

Orig. adv.
Cels. l. 1.
p. 47.

thus he tells us, *I came to call Sinners to repentance*

What kind of Sinners doth he mean? *Peccatores* Mat. 9. 13.
Drusus in

καὶ ἑξοχῶν, saith *Drusus* he means even the most Mat. 6. 9.
v. 10.

Notorious Sinners that can be; an evidence where of God gave the world betimes, in that he was pleased, by an extraordinary course, to reveal the birth of his Son, not only to certain Shepherds, that more simple, harmless, and innocent kind of Persons; but even to these Magicians in the Text; who, if Sorcerers and Conjurers, as many suppose, were certainly some of the vilest of men; so vile, that they were to dye without mercy by the express law of God. And if such as these, upon their Conversion, were not excluded from having a share in the benefits and satisfaction of Christ; there is no sinner so great, but, if he will timely come in, as these men did, he may yet find the same Acceptance.

3. These Persons in the Text may be considered in respect of their Station and Quality in the world.

As to this, *Zegerus* tells us, *Haec quaquam viros* Zegerus
in locum. *vulgares ac Plebeios*, These Magicians were Persons of no small account; *St. Cyprian* calleth them Cypr. de
de stella et
Magis. *Tanti nominis Persona*, Men of a very great Esteem

and Reputation; men of high Authority in matters both Religious and Civil. *Sozomen* saith of them Sozom.
Hist. l. 2. c. 9.

ὡς περ φύλον τι ἱερατικὸν Περσῶν δεησείαν ἐπὶ πάντων, These Magicians amongst the Persians did, as a Tribe of Priests, manage the whole concerns of their Religion. And as to matters of State, *Socrates* tells Socrates
Hist. l. 7.
cap. 8. us, *ὥς δὲ οὗ Περσῶν βασιλεὺς πολλὸν ἔχουσιν*. They were men of great Prevalence and swayed much with the Persian King.

So

So great an esteem had the people for them, that
 Tertul. adv. *Tertullian* tels us *Magos Reges fere habuit Oriens*, The
 Judæes. *Eastern* nations did commonly elect their Kings out
 Post ablatum *of their Magicians*. And that these very men in the
 Mago Imperi- *Text were Kings themselves*, is the opinion of ma-
 um &c. Sen. *ny. Theophylact* stiles them Περσικὸς βασιλεὺς. *Persian*
 de Ira. l. 3. *Kings*. St *Cyprian* saith *apparuit stella Regibus*, the
 Theophyl. in *star appeared to the Kings*, not that any of these
 Matth. c. 2. *was ὁ μέγας βασιλεὺς the great Persian Monarch*, but
 that every one of them are thought by these and o-
 ther Authors to have been *Princes*.

And perhaps God Almighty, by sending these
 great men to wait upon his Son, might intend to
 give the world an early intimation, that the design
 of his Incarnation was to save men of *all* rankes &
 Qualities, in evidence whereof his birth was re-
 vealed, as to the *sheepherds* being men of *low degree*
 and slender fortunes, so to these *Magicians* in the
 Text who were Persons of *great wealth & Honour*.

4. These Persons in the text may be considered
 in respect of their *Number*.

The Evangelist, not telling us how many these
 Magicians were, hath left Interpreters at liberty to
 make their own Conjecture. Some have thought
 them Fourteen, others Twelve; but the most re-
 ceived opinion is, that they were but Three; whose
 Names were, *Jaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar*.

Maldon in
 locum.
 Drusius in
 locum.

That Three they were, is guessed, because the
 Evangelist doth still call them *Μάγοι* Magicians,
 not in the Dual, but Plural Numder; and that there
 but Three, is believed, because their Gifts were no
 more. For this *S. Austine* is very positive, *Tres sunt*,

& *singuli singula offerunt*. Three they were, and each of them brought his Particular Present; one his Gold, another his Frankincence, and the Third his Myrrhe.

And who can tell but that God was pleased to reveal the birth of his Son to such a small number of these great and rich men, to let us know sometimes, that the greatest part of Converts to the Christian faith should consist, as it certainly did in those early ages, of Mean and Inferiour Persons, a thing, which the Enemies of our Religion did observe and laugh at.

It was the matter of *Julian's* scoff, that the Professours of Christianity generally were, as St. *Chrysostom* expresth it. *Οἰκέται, ἡγῆται μύλαι, εὐνῆχοι*, Servants, Nurses, Midwives, Eunuchs, &c. So he in *Minucius Felix*, who calls them *Profane Conjuratōnis Plebs*, and again, *de sæce infima Collecti*, the profane Rabble, the very Dregs and scum of mankind; as if that calumny of *Celsus* had been true, *μυδιὰς ὁποῖον πεπαιδευμένος, μυδιὰς σαρξ*, &c. No man, that is Learned, or Wise, must a Profelyte to Christ.

Chryl. in
Cor. c. 2. v. 16.
Menucius
Fel. Octav.

Origines
adv. Cels. l.
30. p. 137.

That these General Imputations were utterly false, we have, besides other Instances, a fair Intimation in the Text; wherein we find several persons, miraculously brought unto, and certainly believing on the Son of God, who were men of a very considerable Quality and great esteem in the World. But withal, it was the observation of St Paul, *not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* And such

1 Cor. 1. 16

such were these Magicians, σοφοί, Men of great
 wisdom, δυνατοί, Men of great Authority ; and,
 1 Cor. I. 26. that St. Paul's Character may exactly answer their
 condition, 'tis very probable, that they might be,
 ευγενεῖς, Men of noble birth too. Now, though
 some Persons of this high rank and Quality were
 so early brought to Christ yet, according to the
 Apostles assertion, they were ὡς πολλοί not very ma-
 ny. They are presumed to be but Three, which
 might be looked upon as a sad Presage and In-
 stance, that the future number of great men, which
 should in after ages believe on Christ, was like to
 prove but small. And so we pass from the Per-
 sons, to whom the birth of Christ was now reveal-
 ed, to consider.

Hammodus
 in locum.

2. The occasion, Instrument, or means of this
 Revelation ; and that lieth in those words, ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ, at its
 rising, so some ; but most Interpreters read it, as
 we do *in Oriente* in the the East. i. e. Eastward
 from Hierusalem.

Concerning this Star in the Text we shall en-
 quire into these Four things ; 1. what kind of Star
 this might be. 2. why this Star is called ἡ ἀστὴρ αὐτοῦ,
 His Star, our Saviours Star. 3. when this Star
 might first appear, and. 4. How these Wise men
 might know this Star to be the Star of Christ,
 and what they might gather from it.

1. The first thing considerable about this Star
 in the Text is it's Nature and Quality, what kind
 of Star it might be.

That it was indeed a very Glorious light is ge-
 nerally

nerally agreed on; St. *Cyprian* calleth it, *Præclari luminis stellam*, a Star of eminent splendour; So exceeding bright, that, St. *Chrysostom* saith of it, *Ἀκτῖνας ἐπέκλυεν ἡλιακός*, it out-shined the very Sun it self,

*Cypr. de stel-
la & Magis.*

*Chrysost.
Hom. 6. in
Matthæum.*

But what kind of Star it was, whether it were such as the same Father speaks, *Ἐν φύσει ἢ ἐν ὁφθαλμῶν*, as *Prodigium* in Nature and Reality, or in Appearance only, 'tis a thing very uncertain. for

*Sciscitantur
at Prodigium
st, at Sidus.
Sen Nat qu.
lib. 7.*

1. Some few there are, who imagine, that it might be a Real Star; one of those luminous and heavenly bodies, which God created in the beginning.

*Maldonatus
in locum.*

And as for those difficulties, wherewith our Star, in this notion, would be attended, arising from its Motion, Station, and other Circumstances; the favourers of this opinion do answer them all only by appealing to the Omnipotence of God. They tell us, that God, *with whom all things are possible*, the same God, who did make the *Sun stand still* at one time, and perhaps *go back* at another; might, and peradventure did, by the same Almighty Power, remove some glorious Star from its proper Orb, to the lower region of the Air, to be *ἡ δούλος χειρῶν*, the Torch-bearer of his Sun, to light him into the world, and to guide these Wise-men to the place of his birth. But

*Ὁμοίᾳ ὧν
ἀσὴρ τοῖς
ἀστροῖς ἀσ-
εὶς ἢ πᾶσα
καὶ χροίῳ.
Origen in
Joan. p. 27.*

2. The Generality of Interpreters are of another mind, and do think that this Star in the Text was only Equivocally such, as having the Name and Resemblance, but not the Nature and Quality of a Real Star.

St. *Basil* tels us that it was, *οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ὄντων Ἀστέρων*, not

*Bl. M. de bu-
mana Christi
Gener. p. 592.
of*

Greg. Nyf.
in diem Christi.
natalem.
Chrysostom.
Hom. 6. in
Matheum.

of the Real Stars; *Gregory Nyssene*, calleth it, *Καινόν τι σημεῖον* κατ' ἐξουσίαν θαυμάτων, one of the New Prodigies of Heaven; and as for *St. Chrysostom*, he delivers his opinion thus, 'Οὐ γὰρ πολλῶν εἰς ὃ ἁπλῶς ἔτ' ἔρ, This Star was none of those numerous ones, which were made at first. And for this opinion there are some probable Reasons given; for

1. This Star was such, as had never been observed or seen till now.

Orig. adv. 7
Cels. l. 1. p. 45.
Chryl. Hom.
6. in Mat.
Basil. M. de
hum. Christi
gen. p. 591.
Aug. Ser. 5.
& 7. in Epiph.

So thought *Origen*, *Καινὸν ἔθ' νομίζομεν*, we judge this Star to be a New one, so new, that *St. Chrysostom* styles it 'Ἀστὴρ ξένος, a Star that was a Stranger. Accordingly *S. Basil* styles it 'Ἀστέρ ἀσυνήθης, an Unusual Star; *St. Augustine* calls it *Sidus novum*, an again, *St. Iam* *ignotissimam*, a New Star, a most Unknown one; and tells us withal, that as it never appeared before this time, so was it never seen any more after it had once conducted these Wisemen to the place of our Saviours birth. But

2. The Region, wherein this Star was seen, was much Lower than that of other Stars.

Origen, adv.
Cels. l. 1. p. 45.

For whereas other Stars are situated, as *Origen* speaks, 'Εν τῇ ἀπλανεῇ καὶ ἡ κατωτέρω σφαίρῃ, Either in the Firmament it self, or in those Orbs, that are next below it; this Star in the Text was seen far below the Moon, and near the Ground. Thus *St.*

Chryl. Hom.
6 in Ma.

Chrysostom, τὸ μὲν ὑψηλὸν ἀφ' οὗ κατέβη, This Star leaving the Altitude of other Stars came down; but how low did it descend? *Theophilact* answers, Πεσγυιότῃς γινόμενον &c. it came down so low, as to be a near neighbour to the Earth; much nearer then any other Star, even in its *Perigæo*; so near, that

Theophil. in
locum.

that it seemed to stand just over our Saviours head,

And indeed there was a necessity, that this Star should thus Descend, because otherwise it could not have done that work, for which, it was designed; for the business which it had to do, was to conduct these Magicians, not only to the Country or Town, but to the very particular House, where our Saviour was, which work it could never have done, had it been at the same height with those other stars which shine and are fixed above. For although such and such Stars or Comets raised up high, may be guessed to be Perpendicular and Vertical to such and such whole Kingdoms and large Nations of the world; yet that any Star, at so vast a distance, should directly and certainly point at any Particular House, and that but a Little one too, as this Star visibly did, no intelligent Person will imagine.

Upon which account *St. Chrysostom* saith *καταβὰς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*, This Star came down, and so even without a Parallaxe, shewed these Wise men the place, where our Saviour was. And if so, if this Star in the Text was so much lower then all other Stars besides; we may conclude, that, if there were no Miracle in the case, it could not be any of that glorious number.

3. This Star in the Text may well be thought to have been much less then any natural Star whatever.

St. Paul tells us, and our own Eyes may do so too. *One Star differs from another Star in glory*: They differ in Degrees of their light, and in Quantity of their dimensions. For, if our Mathematicians

1 Cor. 15.

*Keckerm.
Syst. Astron.
l. 1. c. 2.*

ans

Gassendus
Institut. Astr.
i. 2. c. 14.

Galaxia cœ-
lestis tractatus
infinitis stel-
lulis, quas

Sporades vo-
cant, instratus
et luminosus.

Fromondus
Meteorol. l. 2.
Art. 2.

ans do not misinform us, there are several Stars, that are an 108 times bigger then the whole Terrestrial Globe; whereas those *ἑνταξία*, in the Milkey way, if Stars indeed, are supposed to be far lesser Gemmes; *Stellulae*, diminutive Stars, so do

Authours stile them.

But how small soever any Star among the Six several Magnitudes, may seem to be; we may rationally presume, that this Star in the Text, notwithstanding its glorious light, was yet far less. For, had it been of any such Magnitude, as came any whit near to that of other Stars, it could never have led the Wise men so directly, as it did, to that Particular place, where our blessed Saviour was found by them. For, had the Circumference of this Star been any way proportionable to that of other Stars; when it came to *Bethlehem*, and there stood still, it must have hung, like a Vast Canopy, not only over the whole Town, but the whole Country round it; and so having an equal aspēt upon all the Houses there, it must needs have left the Wise men very uncertain, which might be the right One. But since we have a very fair intimation from the Evangelist, that, by the standing still of this Star, the Wise men were enabled so readily to know and distinguish the House, where our Saviour was, from all its Neighbours; we may thence infer, that this Star was so little, as to be no real Star at all.

4. The Motion of this Star in the Text differed from the common Motion of all other Stars besides. And this difference lay in Two things;

1. This

1. This Star in the Text did not take the same Course with other Stars,

St. *Chrysostom* tells us, οὐκ ἔστιν ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ βασιζέσθαι ὁδόν, *Chrysost.*
Never did any Star go the same way with this. *Hem. 6. in*
For, whereas the Sun, Moon, and other Heavenly *Matth.*
Luminaries do move from East to West, this Star
moved, as the same Father saith, ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς πρὸς
μεσημβρίαν, from the *Bear*, i. e. from the North to the
South, a Motion, saith *Grotius*, *Præter naturam*,
& *citra exemplum*, Preternatural, and without Ex-
ample.

2. This Star in the Text did not move with that Uniformity and Constancy that other Stars do.

The Fixed Stars have indeed, as *Gregory Nyssene* *Greg. Nyl.*
words it, στασιμὰ κίνητον, a Station so firm and settled, *in diem Christi*
that they never move, except it be as Parts of, and *natalem. p.*
together with their own Orb. And as for those *776.*
few other Stars, which have a Distinct and particu-
lar Motion of their own, ἡ πρὸς τὴν κίνησιν, saith the
same Father, Their Motion never ceaseth.

But this Star in the Text seemed to be of a dou-
ble or middle Nature, κίνησις μετὰ καὶ στασιμότης, saith he;
It sometimes moved, and it sometimes stood still; *Lunaris or-
bita, cetero-
rumque supra
lunam mean-
tium motus
nec hesitat
usquam, nec
resistit. Sen.
Naturalium.
qu. l. 7. 10.*
So the Evangelist tells us, Περὶ αὐτῆς. It went be-
fore them, but by and by, ἔστη, It stood; a sufficient
Argument to prove, that, if there were nothing
Miraculous in it, it could not be a Real Star; no
Fixed Star, because it sometimes Moves; no Pla-
net, because it sometimes stood. But if it were
indeed no Natural and proper Star, What was it
then? There are Three opinions about it:

1. Some think this Star in the Text was nothing
else

Basil. M. de
hum. Chr. sti
gen. p. 592.
Origen adv.
Cels. l. 1. p. 45.

else but a Blazing Star or Comet ; kin to these, which St. Basil styles Δοκίμης, Βόδυνος, or as Origen calls them, Πισοι, Παγωνίαι, raised at this juncture of time by the over-ruling providence of God, purposely for this Occasion.

Basil. ut supra

St. Basil himself contradicts this Opinion, and gives his Reason, why This Star could not be a Comet, thus, ἔτι αἰνῶντοι καὶ ἐν περιγραπῇ τότῃ ὅς

comites ha-
bet suam se-
dem. Sen. qu.
Nat. l. 7.

Comets are Fixed, Unmoveable, and so Circumscribed by their own matter in some particular places, as this Star was not. But, I find that Origen had other

ὡς πάλιν
ἐν ἐνιστῶν
κομήτης.
Euf. Hist. l. 3.
c. 8.

thoughts concerning it; πᾶς γὰρ τοῦτο ἔστι νομίζομεν, ὅτι ποῖος κομήτης, ὅς. We suppose this Star to be the self same kind with Comets, ὅς. So he, and many others. But,

Orig. ubi supr.

2. There are some, who think that this Star in the Text might be the Ever-blessed Spirit of God. As if the same Spirit, who was pleased afterwards to descend in the shape of a Dove at our Saviours Baptism; had also descended now at his Birth, in the form of a Star, that so he might Visibly attend the wonderful Nativity of that Blessed Babe, whom he had already so miraculously framed in His Virgin Mothers Womb.

3. There are others, who think that this Star in the Text was, not the Spirit of God, but some one of His glorious Angels.

We read that an Angel was employed to declare the Conception of Christ to his Mother, His Birth to the Shepherds, and why not to these Wise

Chrysoft. in
Matth. Hom. 6.

men too? St. Chrysostom calls this Star Δύναμις Ἀγγελικῇ, an Angelical Power, and after him Iheophi-
last,

last, Δύναμις Ἀγγελικὴ εἰς τὸ ποῖν Ἀστέρος φαινομένη, an Angelical Power appearing in form of a Star. Theophil. in locum.

This Conjecture is grounded upon the Motions of this Star, wherein it seemed to be guided with a great deal of Reason, even like that Pillar of the Cloud, which of old divided betwixt the Camp of Israel and that of Egypt. For *Theophilact* tels us. *κινεμένων οὖν Μάγων, &c.* when the Wise men went forward, the Star moved; and when they rested, the Star stood still. Exod. 14. 20

To this *St. Chrysostom* adds another Circumstance to prove this Star to be λογικὴ πάλιν δύναμις, a most Rational Power; and that because it did either Conceal or Shew itself, according as the Design of God and the Exigence of things did so require; as if this Star, according to that of the old opinion of the *Platonicks*, had been endued with Sense and Reason; and had some glorious Angel, not only to assist, but even to inform it too. And thus much for the Nature and Quality of this Star.

2. The second thing considerable about this Star is the Relation, wherein it Stands. The Text stiles it, *His Star*: but why His?

Doubtless, there is no Star whatever but is our Saviours right; they are all His, because he Made them; they are all His, because he Upholds and Over-rules them. But this Star in the Text was His for a more peculiar reason. *St. Basil* saith of it, *πρὸς ἣν καὶ τινι ὑπερχεῖ*, It was some Persons star, and purposely made for the service of that Person; who that Person was, and what Service it did him, *Gregory Nazianzene* tels us, *χεῖρ παρσίαν ἀρετῆς ἔλασσεν*, It Basil. M. de hum. Christi gen. p. 193. G. Naz. Orat. 4. p. 111.

D

declared

declared the Advent and Presence of Christ
 Cypri. de Stel- Wherefore St. Cyprian calleth it, *Parvuli nati In-*
 la & Magis. dex : and so Tertullian, *Index & dux* : and Origen
 Tertul. adv. stile it, *Διάκονος & ἡγεσίας Ἰησοῦ*. All which expressi-
 Judeos. ons are so many Intimations, that this Star was call-
 Origenes in ed His Star, because it was designed by God to de-
 Joan. Tom. 2. clare the birth of His Son, and to guide the Wise
 p. 27.

Κομῆται δὲ men to him. But

3. The Third and last thing considerable about
 πῶς βασιλέ- this Star is its Significancy; what there was in it,
 ων διαδοχὰς that could move these Wise men to believe, that it
 δηλῶντες was indeed His Star; such a Star, as did certainly
 τῶν ἐξουδὶν signify, that the promised Messias was now actual-
 ἰσχυρῶς. ly and newly born.

Basil. M. de
 hum. Christi

gen. p. 592.

Chryf. Hom.

5. in Matth.

St. Chrysostom saith well, *οὐ τὸ Ἀστρονομίας ἔργον*,
 It was not possible for these Wise men ever to have
 known the birth of Christ from the bare appearance
 of this Star without the Concurrence of some other
 Circumstances, which might contribute their Evi-
 dences too. For, although a long and frequent
 Observation hath taught the world, that Comets do
 often portend μεταβάσεις βασιλειῶν, saith Origen; *Nova*
 Orig. adv. *Imperia* saith Grotius, Translations of Kingdomes,
 Cels. l. 1. p. 45. and Changes of Government : yet that a Particular
 Grot. in loc. Prince should be born, at a Particular time, in a Par-
 ticular Town, to Rule over a Particular Nation, is
 a thing not to be conjectured, much less Conclu-
 ded, as this certainly was, from any Star.

Wherefore 'tis generally believed, that this Star
 did only give these Wise men some little Intelli-
 gence thereby to prepare them for a Greater; that
 God was pleased to deal with them, as being Astro-
 logers

logers, according to their Art ; and by the Information of a new Star to fit them the better for some other way of Revelation. About which, there are these Three Opinions.

1. There are some, who think that God might be pleased to reveal the birth of his Son to these Magicians by the Testimony even of those very Devils, with whom they are supposed to have had very frequent dealings.

But, whether these Devils themselves had yet any certain information concerning the birth of Christ, is a thing, which admits of some debate. 'Tis thought by several Interpreters, that the Devils had no certain knowledge of our Saviours Person till after his Baptism and Temptation in the Wilderness ; and 'tis probable enough, that God might conceal his birth from them, least otherwise they should have raised more bloody Tyrants, than one single *Herod* to have destroyed him in his Infancy.

And yet some strong suspicions of his Birth the Devils might have from several Circumstances ; for there were such and such things already done in order to it ; the Prophecies, which concerned it, were Accomplished, the Time was come, and the Birth of their Messiah was now grown the Expectation and the common Discourse of the Jewish Nation ; there was also the Appearance of this New & Glorious Star ; and besides all this, *Origen* tells us ἐξήνεγκεν οἱ δαίμονες, κατελυθείσης αὐτῶν τῆ ἐνεργείας, the Devils did now find, that their Power was now suddenly Broken, they were disabled from doing their usual feates ; they could not now give these

*Orig. adv.
Cels. l. i. p. 46.
Basil. de
hum. Christi
gen. p. 991.*

Magicians in the Text those assistances, which once they did ; their Oracles began to be silenced, 'Ουκ

Greg. Naz. ἔτι φθίγγεται οὐδὲ, ἐκ ἔτι λέβης μαντεύεται, ἐκ ἔτι Πυθία πη-
adv. Julian. ρεῖται, ἡ Κασαλία σισίγνται, καὶ Ἀνδρείας ἄφωνος ὁ Ἀπόλλων,
Orat. 4. p. 127. so Nazianzene.

And that these Oracles ceased, either immediately upon, or within a very short time after, the birth of Christ, we may well conjecture from that answer, which the Devil of *Delphos* returned to the Roman Emperour, who consulted him, and that

Fevard. in Duplici Hecatombē saith Fevardentius, with an ex-
Iren. adv. traordinary Sacrifice, even a double Hecatomb.
Hæst. l. 4. c. 14. But what said the Devil being so highly treated?

Nicephor. Me Puer Hebraeus, &c. There is an Hebrew Child,
l. 1. c. 17. that stops our Mouthes, and commands us back to Hell.

And truly, this unexpected and suddain failing of the Devils Power, being added to the consideration of this stupendous Star, might well fill these Magicians with wonder, and give them just occasion to believe, that there was now upon earth some Greater Power then that of Hell, though where, and in what Person that Power did reside, the Star as yet had not shewed them.

2. There are others, who think that the birth of Christ, and the meaning of the Star, was revealed to these Wise men in the Text by the Ministry of some glorious Angel.

They, who think that this Star its self was an Angel, need go no further to find out these Wise mens Intelligencer. But, besides this opinion, there is a Tradition, which tells us, that there was both a Star

Star and an Angel too; a little Boy in the body of the Star, discoursing with these Wise men, informing them that the long expected Messias was now newly born; and withal, commanding them to go and do, what they did. But the uncertainty of this leaves room for a Third opinion, which is more probable, and that's this.

3. There are many, who suppose that these Wise men in the Text might take occasion from the Appearance of this Star to believe that the Messias was born, by virtue of a certain Divine Revelation, that was formerly made to *Balaam*, and stands Recorded by *Moses* thus. *There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel*, a Prophecy, which the Antient Jewes did certainly interpret of their Messias; which was so generally known and took for granted, that a certain Impostour, ἀνὴρ φονικὸς καὶ ἀνερπικὸς, saith *Eusebius*; *Filius Mendacii*, said the Jewes; who yet pretended to be the Christ, thought it his great Concern to Name himself בן כוכב The Son of a Star: and that he did, if *Aynsworth* guesses right, with a cunning respect to this Prediction; though *Grotius* thinks that he might take that name from the Place of his Birth or Habitation.

Numb. 24. 17.

Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 4. c. 6.

Aynsworth in Numb. 24. 17.

Now, 'tis attested by several Authours, that these Magicians in the Text were either of the Posterity of this *Balaam* themselves, or at least next Neighbours to them, that certainly were so. And if so, 'tis very like that they might know their Forefathers Prophecy, and what Interpretation was generally put upon it, and so might wait for its Accomplishment.

Greg. Nyss. in Christi natalium. p. 775.

Cypr. de stel- la & Magis.

This

This being granted, 'tis easy to think that this so glorious a Star, so much differing from all other Stars besides, might well mind these Magicians of their Fore-fathers Prophecy; and not only so, but the Appearance, and, as some think, the Long Continuance of this Star, in Conjunction with other Circumstances, might possess them with a strong belief, that the Jewish Prince, whom *Balaam* had Prophecied of, was now actually born; so thought

Basil. M.
Hom. 25. de
hum. Christ.
gen. p. 592.
Orig. adv.
Cels. l. 5. p. 46.

St. Basil, τῇ προφητείᾳ τῆ βαλαὰμ ἀκολουθῶντες &c. and so Origen, ἰδόντες Θεοσημίαν ἐν ἑργῷ, καὶ ἔχοντες τὰς τῆ βαλαὰμ προφητείας, ἐπεχάσασιν, &c. Seeing the Star, that Divine Prodigy, and being acquainted with the Prophecy of *Balaam*, they took it for granted that the Messiah was born; and in confidence thereof they undertook their Journey, and at length gave the Jews this account of their so doing, *We are come to Worship him.* And here 4 things may be enquired into.

1. Whence these Wise men came. 2. Wither. 3. When, and 4. Why.

1. We may consider from Whence these Wise men did come, They came from Persia, say some; from Arabia, say others; from Mesopotamia, saith a Third; from Ethiopia, saith a Fourth; but, be it which it will, 'tis sure that their way was Long, and their Journey great.

Athanas.
Tom. 2. p. 315.
Chryl. Hom.
6. in Matth.
Euseb. Hist.
Eccl. l. 1. c. 8.
Theophyl.
in 2. Matth.

For, so do all Interpreters tell us, They came from far, so *Athanasius*; they came, ἀπ' ἰθυς πολὺ ἀγασκηότος, from a Country very remote, so *St. Chrysostem*. *Eusebius* styles their Journey, τὴν πορείαν, so great a Journey; such a Journey, saith *Theophylaus*, as required, πολὺν χρόνον κατὰ τὴν ὁδοπορίαν,

a great deal of time to go it; and get perhaps not so much as he imagined.

And how doth the Practise of these Magicians condemn many of Us, who declare to the world that we have nothing more of Christianity, then the Name? The Text tells us of certain Strangers, men of great Note in their Country, and came many Scores of miles to find out, and wait upon our New-born Saviour; but, alas! what do we do? we think it much to come One mile, perhaps one Furlong; nay, sometimes we will not come from the very next Door to worship God.

Certainly, God is much more indulgent and kind to us of the Christian Church, then ever he was to the Members of the Jewish, both as to the Materials and Circumstances of his Worship. He requires not from us either such costly Sacrifices, or such chargeable Journeys, as he did from them. For thus did *Moses* command the Jewish nation, *Three times in the year shall all thy Males appear before the Lord God.* But where must it be? at the Tabernacle where ever it should be pitched; but afterwards, at the Temple where ever it should be built. Which being at Hierusalem, the Evangelist saith, *In Hierusalem is the place where men ought to Worship.* Besides their Weekly services in their Synagogues, which answer to our Parochial Churches; the whole body of their Men, that were able to travel, at what distant soever they dwelt, were commanded, at three Solemn Festivals every year, to go up and worship at Hierusalem; and our Saviour himself, whilest he was yet but a Child, did do so.

Exod. 23. 17.

Joh. 4. 20.

And

And yet notwithstanding this exprefs command from God ; *Jeroboam*, that notorious Hipocrite, for his own ends, could tell the People thus, *it is too much for you to go up to Hierusalem*. He seemes cunningly to consult his Subjects ease ; but, in truth, his design was to settle himself the more firmly upon his Throne.

And thus doth the Devil, for his own designs, deal with many of us ; though the Place, where we are more publickly and solemnly to worship God, be at no great distances from us ; not half so far as the Markets and Faires, which we readily go to ; yet this cunning Devil, for the Establishment of his own Kingdom, is apt to tell us, either more immediately by himself, by our own seduced Hearts, or else by such and such cursed Tooles and Instruments of his, *It is too much for you to go up to the Temple of God*.
 1 Reg. 12. 8. And that the Enemy of our Salvation may have the fairer pretence to withdraw silly souls from our Solemn Assemblies, he takes the same course, which *Jeroboam* did, He sets up his Calves in *Dan* and *Bethel*, an Anabaptist prating in this Conventicle, and a Quaker in that ; Only here's the difference, whereas *Jeroboam's* Calves were made of Gold, these of ours are made of a far more ignoble Metal ; Men so Dull, Heavy, and Ignorant ; but withall, so Presuming, Bold, and Confident ; as if their Skuls were made of Lead, and their Browes of Brass.

But were all our Calves like his, Golden Ones indeed ; were all the Teachers of our Private meetings persons of Inoffensive lives, and as Choyce Abilities as some few of our Dissenters are or have been ;

been ; yet methinks to worship our God in *Dan* and *Bethel*, when we should be doing it at *Hierusalem* ; to worship God in this Corner and that, when we should be in the Temple, were a thing more inexcusable in Us then in the Jewes, because We have not so fair a Pretence for it, as They.

For, we cannot well pretend, what *Jeroboam* did, *It is too much for you to go up to Hierusalem*, the Way is too Long, and the Charge too Great ; Their Temple stood at a far greater distance from most of them, then our Churches do from us. But suppose we were at much greater distances from the place of Gods publick worship then indeed we are ; yet to encourage our coming to it for the more solemn service of our God, we have a fair example in the Text ; where we find some Persons of Considerable Quality, Men of Great Parts and Learning, Wise men, who did not stick to come a very great number of Miles purposely to attend our blessed Saviour, and shew him that respect, which was his due ; for, they tell us, *We are come to Worship him* ; Come, though their way was Long, and their Journey exceeding great.

2. We may consider the Place, whereunto these Wise men came, What the First place was, the Evangelist tells us, *There came Wise men from East to Hierusalem*, but why so ? Hierusalem was not the Place of our Saviours Birth, and what then did these Wise men there ?

'Tis sure, that as yet they did not know in what particular place the Messias was to be born ; and as for the Star, *αφ' ου ην*, saith St. *Basil* ; that had now

Mat. 2. 1.

*Basil. de hum.
Christi Gen.
p. 593.*

E

withdrawn

Aug. Ser. 2.
in Epiph.

withdrawn it self & disappeared. Whereupon these Wise men, having lost their Guide, and being wholly left to themselves and their own Conjectures, thought it much more likely to find this Royal Babe in the Royal City rather than in any other place whatsoever.

Non ita natu-
ra est, ut Re-
ges nascentur
in Seculo, &c.
Aug. Ser. 2. in
Epiph.

But since our blessed Saviour was not now to come into the world with that Magnificence and Splendour, which commonly attends the Birth of Secular Princes; since he was to appear in a state of Humiliation, and in the form of a Servant rather than that of a Temporal King, such as these Wise men thought him; that the Place of his Birth might be suitable to its other Circumstances, it must not be the Great Metropolis, but a Little Town; and there too, no well Furnished Chamber, but a Stable.

This being a thing, which these Wise men could never have imagined, God was pleased to send them to Hierusalem, there to receive Information from the most Learned men of the Jewish Church; that so these Strangers finding him at Bethlehem, which the Jews themselves acknowledged to be the Place of his Birth, might be the more Confirmed in their Faith, and receive yet some further assurances, even from This Circumstance of his Nativity too, that he was indeed the promised and true Messias.

And here might we stand a while and admire the most Wise Counsels and Providences of our Good and Holy God! who would not conduct these Wise men directly and immediately to Bethlehem; but he was pleased to lead them first to

Hierusalem

Hierusalem, designing thereby, as to reproach the Jewish Nation for their gross Infidelity, so to send these Strangers home with the greater satisfaction, and stronger Faith.

Magorum illuminationis maximum testimonium cecitatis Judæorum.
Aug. Ser. 2.
in Epiph.

3. We may consider the Circumstance of Time, when these Wise men came. In order to this, we shall enquire into these Three things. 1. When that Star, which occasioned their Journey, might first appear. 2. When these Wise men, upon the Appearance of this Star, might First enter upon their Journey. 3. Within what Space their journey might be compleated. As to every one of these Particulars, I find a variety of opinions amongst Interpreters, who are led only by Probabilities and Circumstances, there being nothing certain in any one of our Evangelists to determine the matter this way or that. For,

1. There is no Text, which specifieth the Precise time, when this Star did First appear. There is little said more then this, *We have seen his Star in the East*, but when they saw it First, they have not told us.

The precise time of this Stars first appearing being left by our Evangelists at great uncertainties, Expositors have took their liberty to make their several Conjectures, and thus they do it. *Theophylact* saith, *Ἦεν τὸ φαινόμενον ἡ Κόκκινος ἀστὴρ*, This Star appeared before our Lord was born; but how long? *St. Chrysostom* answers, *ὅτι πολλὸν χρόνον*, A very Considerable time before; and what that time might be, *St. Augustine* tells us more particularly thus, *Ante firmè biennium*, Almost Two years before.

Theophyl.
in 2. Matth.

Chrys. Hom.
6. in Matth.
Aug. Ser. 7.
in Epiph.

And why the Star should appear to these Wise men so long before our Saviours Birth, *heophylact* gives us this Reason, ἕμελλον πολὺν ἀναλίσκειν χρόνον καὶ τῶν ὁδοποιῶν, So far distant from Bethlehem was their habitation, that had not the Star given them warning of Saviours approaching Nativity so Long before hand, they could not have come timely enough to the place of his birth to find him there, and to do what they did,

But notwithstanding this opinion of these eminent men, thus backed with so considerable a Reason, other Interpreters are of a different judgment.

Basil. M. de hum. Christi Gener. p. 391. For, Great St. *Basil* tells us, Ἐδεῶρον Ἀστὲρ τῇ γεννήσει, *Κυεὶς ἐπαγαγείλαντα*, The Wise men saw the Star arising at our Lords Birth; and before him *Origen*, *Origen. adv. Cels. l. 1. p. 45.* πρὸ δαυμασὸν ἐπὶ τῇ γενέσει αὐτοῦ Ἀστὲρ ἀνατεταλμένος; What wonder is it, that such a Star should arise, not, before, but *at*, the birth of so great a Person? So they.

2. There is no Text, which specifieth the precise time, When these Wise men did first begin their journey.

That they did not set out Immediately upon the very first Appearance of this Star, may well be guessed; for, 'tis not likely, that such Great and Prudent Persons would, rashly and on a sudden, undertake so long a journey. No, before they did, *Basil. M. de hum. Christi Gener. p. 391.* St. *Basil* tels us, ἦ Ἀστὲρ καὶ αἰγῶς ἐδεῶρον, They took some time to contemplate this Star, and maturely consider what it meant.

And although we should suppose the Appearance of this Star many Months before our Saviours birth; yet

yet that these Wise men were not certainly informed what this Star did signifie, till Christ was actually born, seemes to be St. *Austin's* judgment; for thus he tells us, *Eo di', quo natus est Stellam viderunt; & quem natum indicaverit, agnoverunt*, The same day, wherein Christ was born, they saw the Star; and whose Birth it signified, they knew; and being now satisfied of this, *Ex illo die, &c.* saith he, from That very day they began their journey, though *Theophylact* give it an Earlier *Epocha*, and a much longer date. But

Aug. Ser.
40. in Enph.

3. There is no Text, which denotes the Precise time, when these Wise men Arrived at Hierusalem, and went from thence to Bethlehem.

The Evangelist saith no more then this, *When Jesus was born there came Wise men to Jerusalem*, but when they came, how soon, or how long after his birth, he doth not tell us. Mat. 2. 1.

Theophylact mentions, but withal rejects, the opinion of some, who thought that these Wise men were so Long in coming, that when they came they found him *δυσιν ὄντα*, Two years old. For which Conjecture there is no other ground, save only that bloody command of *Herod* for the Murdering of all Infants thereabouts, which were of that age or under.

But this Reason will not do; it will not follow, that our blessed Saviour must then be Two years old, because such a merciless Tyrant, in the excess of his Cruelty, and as he thought, in the depth of his Policy, to secure himself of this blessed Babe amongst the rest, judged it his concern to murder all other Infants that were so.

i That

Chryſoſt.
Hom. 6. in
Matth.

Aug. Ser.
1. in Epiph.

Aug. Ser.
2. in Epiph.

Aug. Ser.
4. in Epiph.

Hammondus
ii locum.

Aug. Ser.
7. in Epiph.

That theſe Wiſe men came at leaſt within Forty daies after our Saviours birth, ſeems evident from our Evangelists; who tell us, that within that ſpace of time he was removed from *Bethlehem*, where yet the Wiſe men found him. St. *Chryſoſtom* ſaith, Πεπορεύμεν ἐν παραστάσει, They worſhiped him being yet in his Swadling Clouts; and St. *Auſtine*. ſaith *ad Cunabula pervenerunt*, They came to his Cradle, and left that expreſſion ſhould not be enough to prove his being ſtill at *Bethlehem*, and leſs then Two years old, he elſewhere tells us. *In praſepi tunc jacebat*, He yet lay in the Manger, which doubtleſs he did not very long.

No; 'tis believed that theſe Wiſe men were at *Bethlehem* on the Twelfth day after that of Saviours birth; ſo testiſieth St. *Auſtine*, who ſpeaks of the Epiphany thus, *Hac die magi Dominum noſtrum adoraffe perhil entur*, The Wiſe men are reported to have worſhiped our Lord upon This day; and that not in the Anniverſary return of that day in the next year, as ſome have thought; but in the ſelf ſame year, wherein Chriſt was born, the very Firſt Twelfth day from his Nativity. That this muſt needs be St. *Auſtine*'s meaning, is evident from what he ſaith elſewhere. For, having newly mentioned the birth of Chriſt, he adds theſe words, *Paucis diebus inde tranſactis, hodie magi ab oriente veniſſe creduntur*, The Wiſe men from the Eaſt are believed to have come this day, being but a few daies after that of our Saviours birth.

And if ſo, we muſt needs grant, that when once they were ſatiſfied & fully informed, what the Star did

did mean, and that our Saviour was now newly Born, they made very little delay, at least if the Star appeared not, 'till his birth was over. But they quickly mounted their swiftest beasts, their Camels, say some; their Dromedaries, say others, that so they might with the more speed attend upon our New-born Jesus.

Cyprianus
de Stella &
magis.

And doth not this Practise of theirs condemn a great deal of ours? For, when they came to worship our blessed Saviour, they were very Nimble at it; quick, even to admiration. For, considering the great distance of their own dwellings from the place of our Saviours birth, the difficulty and wonder of their coming so soon, is one of the greatest Arguments, that are urged against it. But it seems, come they did, a vast Journey, some hundreds of Miles; and yet within a very few daies too.

Such was the Practise of these Men in the Text; but pray tell me what is ours? Certainly, we have as much need, as great Reason, as high Obligations, and many more Invitations to worship Christ, then they. What Invitations they had, more then that one of a Star, we are not sure. But suppose that according to the several Conjectures of Interpreters, they knew and rested upon the old Prophecy of *Balaam*; or, suppose they had some glorious Angel to be their Informer, yet their Advantages of knowing Christ were not like ours. For, whereas they had a Star to guide them, we have a Sun; whereas they had one single Prophecy, that was Mysterious and dark, we have a great many cleer ones; and whereas 'tis possible that they

they might have an Angel to instruct them, 'tis sure that we have a God.

And since our Informations concerning Christ are more and much clearer then theirs were, let us consider whether our Practice be futeable to our knowledge; whether we attend our Saviours service with the same readines and eagerness as these Men did.

For, no sooner were these Wise men satisfied of our Saviours birth, but away they went, that they might wait upon him with all speed imaginable. The same thing the Evangelist observes of the Shepherds too; for, when the Angel had informed them that Christ was born, telling them the Place, wherein they might find him; and giving them a Sign, whereby they might know him, the Text saith, they came with hast, they did not loyter and delay their Attendance, as we do.

Lu. 2. 16.

Apo. 2. 1.

There is not a man amongst us, but is sufficiently instructed where our blessed Saviour must now be waited on; not in a dirty Stable, not in a Barn, but in his Holy Temple; not lying in a Manger, but walking in the midst of his Golden Candlesticks. And perhaps we are so conformeable to the Antient Practice of all other Churches, and the present Commands of our own; as that we do repair to those Places, that are consecrated and set apart for the Publick and Solemn worship of our Holy God. But, are we as quick as the men in the Text? alas! we are generally too slow and backward; we are easily detained from the Temple of God, and that perhaps by Profaness and Irreligion; perhaps by some trivial buisness; perhaps by some idle and wicked

wicked Companions ; upon one account or other, we do not come to attend our blessed Saviour, 'till the better part of his service be over.

Sure I am, this of ours, as 'tis bad in its self, so is it a very sad thing in its Sgnification too: for, 'tis a shrewd Symptom that our Hearts are naught ; it betrayes the Hypocrisy of our Spirits, and gives the World just occasion to suspect, that although we do at length betake our selves to the Publick Service of God, yet we do it against our Inclinations. For, were we as willing to attend our blessed Saviour, as the Shepherds or the Magicians were ; there is nothing, but invincible necessity that should hinder us from being with him as quick, as They ; who tell us in the Text *we are come*, and upon what Errand they came, the next words inform us, *προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ*, *we are come to worship him*, concerning which we may enquire into these Two things. First what that worship was, which these Wise men gave to Christ. Second why they did it. As to the First, their worship consisted in these Two things ;

First, One part of their worship, Homage, and Respect to Christ, did consist in their Humble Deporment and Reverential behaviour whilst they were in his Presence.

The Evangelist tells us, when they saw the young Child, *πρόντες προσκύνοντες*, They fell down and worshiped ; not only with their Knees ; but, if *Erasmus* guesse right, *Prostrati*, they fell with their very Faces down to the ground. They did, what *Grotius* observes out of *Livy*, *More adorantium procubuerunt*.

Mat. 2. 11.

Grotius in loc. cit.

1 Cor. 14. 25.
Job. 1. 20.

runt, They Fell down, as men are wont to do in the highest Act of Adoration. So he in St. Paul, *falling down on his face, he will worship God*; so Job, *He fell down on the ground and Worshiped*. Certainly there is no gesture imaginable, whereby the men in the Text could possibly have expressed a greater Inward Veneration and respect to Christ, then they did by This.

And how stands the case with us in this Particular? when we come to worship our blessed Saviour, as these men did, what Gestures do we use? are we in all our Addresses to God, as Humble and Reverent as They? are we upon our Faces or Knees? are we down upon the Earth, and, were it in our power, would we yet be Lower still? No; we are, many of us, grown too Bold with Heaven; so Rude and Slovenly are we in our addresses to the Son of God, that we behave our selves towards him, as if we were, not Servants, not Petitioners, but rather his Equals. When we are in his Presence; when we speak to him, or he to us, so clownish and unmannerly are we in our deportment towards him; that he might well say to us, what an Emperour once did to a sawcy Petitioner, *Nescivi me tibi esse tam familiarem*, I did not know that you and I were so familiar.

But O! may we learn a more Christian behaviour in our worship of God even from these very Pagans in the Text! *they fell down and worshipped*, There is no one Posture, that can possibly become us more then this; these men have set us such a Copy, as we cannot mend, but should Transcribe; they have

have given us such an Example, as we cannot better, but yet must Imitate and Reach.

Secondly, Another Part of that Worship, Respect and Homage, which these Wise men shewed towards our blessed Saviour, did consist in those Presents, which they gave him.

The Text saith, *they presented unto him Gifts*, Matt. 2. 11. but what were these Gifts of Theirs? Such doubtless as were futeable to the present Condition and Quality of his Person; Gold, Frankincense and Myrrhe, but how much of these? the Context gives us a fair Intimation, that the Quantity was considerable; for, the Evangelist tels us, *ἀνοίξαντες θησαυροὺς*, *When they had opened their Treasures, they presented unto him Gifts*, Certainly, they, who were so Great men, who came so long a Journey purposely to testify their Respects to our blessed Saviour, and in order thereunto brought their Treasures with them, would never present him with any small Trifle, a little Gold, a little Frankincense, a little Myrrhe, some trivial matter, which might have seemed an Affront rather than a Respect. And that their Presents were indeed no small Ones, we shall the more easily be induced to believe, if

Secondly, we shall consider the Motive of their respect to Christ, the Ground and reason why they worshiped and presented him so and so.

Past all peradventure they did not do, what they did, from any designs of their Own, such at least as related to the advantages of this World.

'Tis St. *Chrysostom's* demand, *ποία ἀγαθὴν ἐλπὶς, &c.* Chrysost. Hom. 6. in Matth. what hopes could they have to receive any Advancements

vancements or Honours from a new born Babe, and such a Babe, whom they found yet lying in a Manger? No; the great Motive, why they came and worshiped him, was the Consideration of his Person. Whether they were satisfied of his Dignity by the Appearance of his glorious Star; or whether they understood his Greatness by the Prophecy of *Balaam*, or the Information of an Angel; we have reason to think, that one way or other they were convinced, that our blessed Saviour was the very greatest and most honourable Person, that the World ere saw. 'Tis easy to believe, that they conceived these Two Notions of him;

First, 'Tis very reasonable to believe that they took him to be somewhat more than an Ordinary Prince.

Indeed, when they came to Hierusalem, their demand was only this; *Where is he, that is born King of the Jews?* But did they think him an Ordinary King? If so, what meant they by their coming thither, and that, ἐκ τοσούτου διαστήματος, from so great a distance, purposely to adore him? Suppose it were, as St. *Chrysostom* speaks, νόμος ἔνθους, the custom and fashion of those Eastern Countries to congratulate the birth of Princes, and welcome such Royal Babes into the World with rich and various Presents; yet this respect was never shewed to any New-born King, but such as were their Neighbours.

Aug. Ser. 2. 'Tis the observation of St. *Austine*, *Multi jam nati Reges Judæorum*, We read of many Kings formerly born in the Jewish Nation; but, amongst them

them all, never was there so much as one, that was treated, even in his Cradle, with so much respect from strangers. Wherefore since these Persons in the Text, being men both Great and Wise, did think fit to travel so many Miles into a strange Land, and to carry their Treasures with them, thereby to testify their respect and their Homage to our New-born Saviour; such an address as this, being without any Precedent, and beyond all Examples, looks like an Argument, that they believed him to be, not only a King; but, as indeed he was, the King of Kings, such a King as the World never had besides.

Secondly, 'Tis not hard to believe that these Wise men in the Text had received some Informations of our blessed Saviours Divinity too.

True it is, when they came to *Bethlehem*, they found nothing at all about him, that might shew him to be, what indeed he was. They there saw no Stately Palace, no Bed of State, no Golden Cradle, no glorious Mantles, no such Attendance, nothing of that Splendour, that might be futeable to a Royal Babe, much less to a Son of God. Had they conceived no other Apprehensions of him, then such as might have been framed from his Present Circumstances, they would have been so far from reverencing him, as a God; that they might very justly have thought him one of the Lowest of Men.

But although they found him in a Stable, in sorry Raggs, in a Manger; or, which was almost a thing as mean, in a Poor Mothers Arms, without any thing of Attendance near him; yet notwithstanding,

standing all these discouragements, they did the thing, for which they were come, and that was this, *Πρόντες προσκύνην*, They fell down and worshiped him.

Grot. in lo.
cum Persis
Patria lex est,
ut Regis con-
gressum asse-
ctans non pri-
us confabu-
landi fiat com-
pos, quam illi
cultum exhi-
beat adoratio-
nis, Celsus.
Rhod. Lect.
Antiq. l. 11.
c. 28.

'Tis the Observation of *Grotius*, that this kind of Adoration, though the Grecians would never shew it to any mortal Man, yet was it used in those Eastern Countries, from whence these Wise men came, towards their Kings and Princes. But surely had these Persons in the Text took their measures of our blessed Saviour barely from those Circumstances, wherein they found him; they might have forborn their intended worship, having as little reason from any thing about him to think him King, as God.

Aug. Ser. 1.
in Epiph.

Chalcidus
in Platonis
Timæum.

But that from some Information or other they were satisfied of his Deity, St. *Austine* doth plainly tell us, *Deum cognoverant*, They knew him to be God; so he. And long before him, *Chalcidius*, a Pagan Writer and a Platonick Philosopher, speaks of them thus, *Dicuntur quæsisse recentem ortum Dei, &c.* They are said to have enquired for a God late born, and according to that apprehension of theirs, *Vota tanto Deo convenientia nuncuparunt*, They presented him with such Oblations, as were suteable to the Majesty of so Great a God.

The truth is; that common Interpretation, which the Fathers do generally pass upon these Wise mens Presents, do seem to intimate their belief, that these Magicians had some apprehensions, that this New-born Babe was, *Θεοῦ υἱὸς*, God and Man too, *ἀνθρώπου* π ἐκ Θεοῦ ὃ ἀνθρώπος, One compounded and made

Orig. adv.
Cels. l. 1. p. 46.

made up of God and Mān, as *Origen* speaks. That they had insteed such Conceptions of him were a thing very easy to be believed, if we can but suppose that these Wise men themselves had, in the Choyce of their respective offerings, any Consideration of those things, which the Fathers generally ascribe unto them.

What their Presents were, the Evangelist tels us, Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrhe, but why these rather than any think else? Did the Providence of God so order the matter, that these Magicians should, by a kind of secret Instinct, bring his New-born Son this present of Gold, that he might be provided with something to bear his Charges into *Ægypt*, and keep him and his Parents during the time of their approaching Exile there? Were this supposed, as to their Gold, yet what means their Frankincense and Myrrhe? did they present him with Myrrhe to anoint and cheer his tender Body; and, as *St. Bernard* fancieth, with Frankincense to perfume and sweeten that nasty Stable, wherein they found him? Had God any particular and special design in all this? Or did the Wise men themselves, of their own motion, pitch upon these Presents, barely as being the Choycest Commodities, which their own Country did afford them?

*Bernardus
in sentent. p.
506.*

That there was some Significancy in them, and that these Magicians did, through a Divine Impulse upon their Spirits, make choyce of these particular Presents rather than any other matters whatsoever, not barely for the Value of the Things themselves,

themselves, but rather from a respect had to the Quality of our Saviours Person, is, so far as I can find, the Universal opinion of the Fathers. *Irenæus* tells us, *Per ea, quæ obtulerunt, munera, ostenderunt quiderat, quod odorabatur*, They declared by their Gifts, who and what manner of Person he was, whom they adored. Thus doth Great St. *Basil* testify, χρυσόν, ὡς βασιλεῖ, They gave him Gold, as to a King, λίβανον, ὡς θεῷ, saith *Gregory Nyssene*, they gave their Frankincense to him, as to a God, and as for their Myrrhe, a thing used in the Emblaming of Dead Bodies to preserve them from Putrefaction, they gave him this, ὡς νεκρῷ, saith *Gregory Nazianzene*; or, as *Origen* phraseth it somewhat better, ὡς πεθνήζομένῳ, as to a mortal Man, who was to Die and be Buried, but withal to see no Corruption.

And if we may suppose that the Wise men in the Text had indeed these Apprehensions concerning Christ; if we may take it for granted, that notwithstanding the great Poverty of his present Condition they did yet believe him to be a King and a God; we have very little reason to wonder that they should come so many Miles to attend, worship, and present him so and so.

'Tis far greater wonder, that we, who are the Members of the Christian Church, should fall so extreamly short even of these very Strangers in shewing those respects, which We, much more than They, do owe to Christ. For, although that of St. *Bernard* be a truth, *Qui illos adduxit, ipse & instruxit*, the same God who brought them to worship

*Irenæus adv.
Hæc. l. 3. cap.
10.*

*Basil. M. de
hum. Christi
Gener. p. 592.
Greg. Nyss.
in die Christi
natal. p. 782.*

*Greg. Na-
zianz. Orat.
38.*

*Orig. adv.
Cels. l. 1.
p. 46.*

*Bernard. Ser.
1. in Epiph.
p. 75.*

ship his Son, had also himself taught them; that he was his Son indeed; yet 'tis not easy to imagine, that these Wise men should know as much concerning our Saviour, being then but in his Cradle, as we do now. 'Tis like enough that they might hear him Crying like a Child in his Mothers Armes; perhaps they might see him, like other Babes, Sucking his Mothers Breasts; 'tis certain that they could then see nothing about him with an Eye of Flesh, but such mean Circumstances, as might have rendred him an Object rather of Compassion and Pity, then of Worship and Adoration. We cannot say, that They did then foresee, what we do now know of Christ; the stupendious Miracles of his Life, the mighty wonders of his Death, his Raising himself and others from their Graves; and whether they had yet any distinct and explicate belief of his Ascension into Heaven, and his Session at Gods Right Hand, we cannot tell.

But yet notwithstanding, though they saw sufficient Evidences of his present Poverty, but possibly as yet knew very little of his Future Glory, having seen no other visible Character thereof, for ought we know, save only that of the Star; yet, as St. Bernard speaks, *Procidunt*, They fall down before him, *Venerantur, ut Regem; adorant, ut Deum*, they Worship him, as a King; and which is infinitely more, they Adore him, as a God.

Bernard. Ser.
I. in Epiph.
p. 75.

And if so, how much more are we obliged to do so, who have his Gospel, and are acquainted with all the Stories which concern him? We do not now see him in a Stable, but do verily believe him to be
G upon

upon a Throne; we do not now find him in the Arms of *Mary*, his Poor Mother, but do believe him to sit at the Right Hand of God, his Father; what Signal Testimonials he had of his Divinity both from Heaven and Hell; from the voyce of his Father, from the descent of his Spirit, and from the Confessions of the very Devils themselves, 'tis like enough, that these Wise men in the Text did never know, as we do. 'Tis very probable, that they might be all in their Graves, before our blessed Saviour did manifest any thing of his Glory; and by his holy Life, excellent Doctrine, and mighty Works, declare himself to be the Son of God.

And if They, long before any thing of this was done, did thus adore him, even when he was but a Babe, and that, in all outward Appearance, but a very Poor one too, what then should we do? We, who know what incomparable Sermons he Preached, and what stupendious Miracles he wrought; We, who find him so often waited on by glorious Angels; We, who may well be supposed to have many more Demonstrations of his Deity then these great Men in the Text, what must we do?

'Tell me, shall we, who have a long time professed the name of Christ, deal more rudely with him, then these Magicians did, who were mere Strangers to him and Profelytes but of a Day? They came a long Journey to Worship him, and shall we think much to step over the Threshold? They fell down before him in a Stable, and shall not we do as much in a Church? They presented him
with

with Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrhe; and have we just nothing for him? He was pleased to give himself both to and for the Sonns of Men, and shall we make him no Returns at all? Yes; let us present him with our selves, and when we do so, we shall but give him, what's his own.

Let us shew our selves to be like the Persons in the Text, Wise men indeed, by offering to our blessed Saviour the self same Presents, which They did. Let us give him something of our Gold by works of Charity to his distressed Members; Let us give him something of our Spiritual Myrrh by the Purity of our Lives, and Acts of Mortification; let us also present him with our Spiritual Frankincense by our Prayers and Praises in this World, that so we may do it in the next by our Thanksgivings, Doxologies, and Hallelujah's, forever and ever.

Δόξα Θεῷ.
